



# research matters

A project co-funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), *Research Matters* (RM) supports the effective exchange and translation of sound and innovative research findings among a wide range of research-users and decision makers. This newsletter is published semiannually and contains updates about RM's projects, activities and products, with a specific focus on a topic that we believe is of interest to our partners. This current issue concentrates on **Context Mapping** (see reverse).

RM Web Site Updates @ [www.research-matters.net](http://www.research-matters.net)

We are pleased to announce three new Research Matters supported Evidence-to-Policy demonstration products:

**The KT Toolkit:** The much anticipated [Knowledge Translation Toolkit: a resource for researchers](#) is now available! Following the 2004 Mexico City Ministerial Summit of Health Ministers, which focused on bridging the research to policy and practice gap, also referred to as the "know-do" gap, Research Matters has produced a free, Knowledge Translation Toolkit comprising twelve stand-alone chapters which may be read in sequence or individually.

**Video:** [Mexico to Mali: Evidence to Policy in Africa](#) chronicles three African-driven attempts to bridge the evidence-to-policy divide discussed at Mexico's 2004 Ministerial Summit on Health Research. What progress have African countries made since then?

**RealHealthNews:** Researchers and policy-makers in Africa tell the real, hard story of creating evidence-informed policy to benefit developing country communities. For their stories and those from the ground, see this November 2008 special issue of [RealHealthNews](#), showcased at the Bamako Ministerial Forum for Research on Health.

Podcasts, Thinkpieces, Briefing notes, Videos, Toolkits, Conference Reports, Mapping Tools...

## RM ACTIVITIES

✦ [ZAMFOHR](#) – continuing support to this emerging Knowledge Translation Institute that aims to broker research to policy links, develop strategic plans, and manage a national Health Research database.

✦ [HRCS](#) – capturing the Kenyan and Malawian experiences in designing national health research coordination plans that aim to strengthen capacity for undertaking, translating, and utilizing research.

✦ [Health Research Web](#) – providing technical input for COHRED's regional consultations for an int'l internet-based database.

✦ [Bellagio Essential Surgery Group](#) – introducing the principles of KT to a group of surgeons intending to influence regulation and policy.

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# Context Mapping

**Context Mapping. Political Mapping. Power Mapping. Stakeholder Analysis.** Whatever the term, the idea connecting each is an appreciation of *the setting* that surrounds research. Every issue unfolds against its own spectrum of actors, from supporters to detractors to fence-sitters. As research is generally not a neutral input, the more we know about our context, the greater the chance our ideas and findings might influence it. Who might welcome our work? Who might oppose it? At a more meta-level, how are policies in our field formulated? What is the current policy environment? Which global actors might be involved?

Context cannot be overemphasized: context is everywhere, context affects everything. The simple and self-evident truth is that if we wish to be influential, we must know who and what we're trying to influence. The more we can unite research with its context, the better the chance of influencing the policy process.

## ***Who is our target audience?***

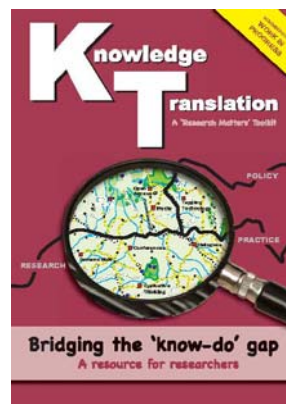
*The target audience is an essential part of our research from the very outset.* The more we can pair objectives with audience in our design, the more likely we'll link both in practice. The better we understand an audience, the easier we'll be able to desegregate it. Who is better placed to act on our findings or recommendations? Which group is in a position to influence others?

## ***What are the information needs of our target audience?***

The ways in which target audiences receive and absorb information is shaped by many factors, including their personal preferences and habits, literacy and education levels, degree of access to various media formats, and their level of understanding of the issue. To communicate with any audience, we must consider *their* needs first – and not *our* abilities or desires.

Discussed mapping tools include:

- ***Stakeholder Analysis*** – determining whose support should be sought;
- ***Force-Field Analysis*** – identifying the different forces influencing a particular issue;
- ***Policy Network Mapping*** – mapping relationships between ourselves and those who wield political influence.
- ***Influence Mapping*** – differentiating between decision-makers and those who can influence them (e.g. opinion leaders).



Want to learn more about *Chapter 4: Context Mapping* and other KT strategies?

See the *KT Toolkit*. It's online, and it's free:

[http://www.idrc.ca/rm\\_kt\\_toolkit](http://www.idrc.ca/rm_kt_toolkit)